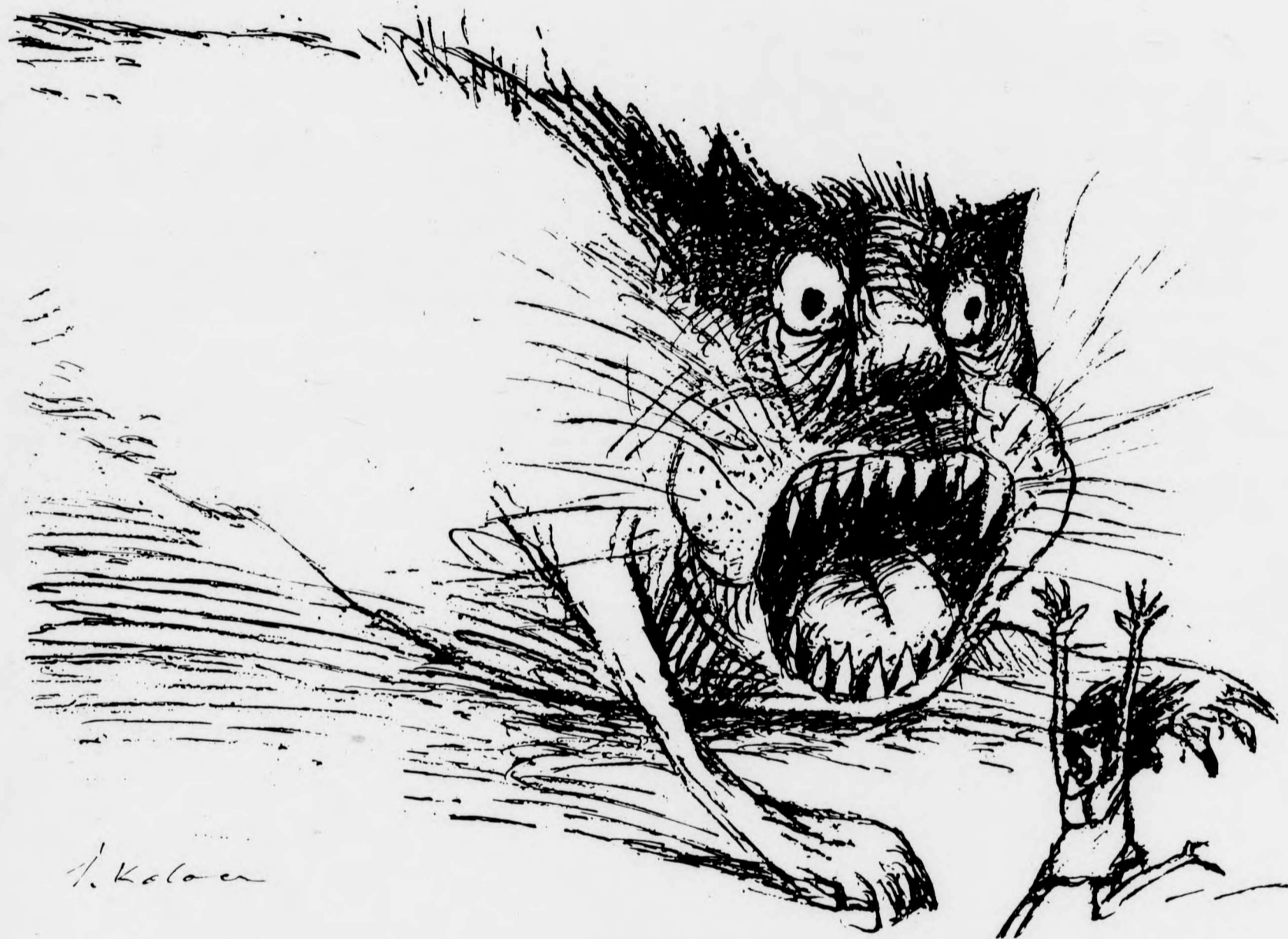


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# Jerzy Kolacz

Since arriving in Canada as a virtual unknown, **Jerzy Kolacz** has risen to the top of the international ranks in the field of illustration. Kolacz came to Canada from Poland in 1978 and has been pursuing a career in commercial illustration since 1981. Kolacz studied fine art and applied art at the National College of Fine Arts in Gdansk and at the Academy of Fine

Arts in Warsaw. In Poland, Kolacz worked professionally in poster design—winning several design awards. Kolacz's illustrations have appeared in numerous Canadian and American publications. An exhibition of Kolacz's editorial illustrations and paintings, *The Mind's Eye*, is at Glendon Gallery until December 19. *Excalibur's* **Janice Goldberg** spoke with Kolacz.



**EXCAL:** *When did you first begin doing illustration?*

**KOLACZ:** In the very beginning of my career in Gdansk (Poland) at art college, I did some illustrations for some papers but was more involved in poster design; I didn't do any illustrations for magazines at all. Creating a poster is much the same as creating an illustration for a magazine because there is a comment, an introduction to the problem.

When I came to Canada I didn't have any idea of what I would do. I thought I would be able to produce some posters and to be a painter, but a painter, you either are or you are not. So when I came to Canada I was a painter full-time. I had shows in Canada and I still had shows in Europe. I worked for a display exhibition design company for about two years. It was quite boring, very boring actually, because creativity was limited . . .

There was very little to do . . . In my spare time I did a lot of drawings because it was very easy. Somebody told me that I should try to get in touch with magazines. So after a while I did. My first assignment was for Steve Manley of Canadian Business. And slowly I got more and more assignment; some awards came and I found myself in the business and right now I am up to here in work. I still have time for painting because I like to share 50-50 the time I spend on illustration and painting.

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**EXCAL:** *What are you trying to express in your paintings?*

**KOLACZ:** In a painting I think the comment is secondary. I think painting is a result of a deeper observation of life. Myself being put into this life—it's more my reaction. Painting is always a personal statement. For me this is like the difference between a poet and a journalist.

**EXCAL:** *Do you think that painting is a higher art form than illustration or do you believe that they have completely different objectives?*

**KOLACZ:** There is no hierarchy in my opinion. The difference is like sleeping and eating for us—everything is important. I think that painting is a need to express oneself. It's a pleasure; it's fighting; it's disaster; it's laughter; it's everything. Being a member of society you have a natural need to share your opinions about what is going on. Being an illustrator I have this great opportunity to do that, together with the writers. If I am lucky I have a chance to show my own point of view.

**EXCAL:** *What do you, then, consider your role as an illustrator?*

**KOLACZ:** The story is focused on something; what I try

to do in my illustration is to show more doors, more ways to interpret it, to provoke the readers' opinion.

**EXCAL:** *Are you trying to get the reader to bring more to the story?*

**KOLACZ:** Yes. I'm trying to massage the mind; to get the reader to participate in the story. I try to use the oldest way of communication—the picture—to say as much as possible. To invite reading of the story and to use those areas of perception which a writer can't—it is a different way of reaching the reader.

**EXCAL:** *I've had writers say to me that what they admire about illustrations is their immediacy as compared to writing where the reader must read and digest the information in order to make an evaluation.*

**KOLACZ:** Yes, I think that an illustration should not only illustrate what is in the story because (then) it is like repeating what the writer is turning out. It is important to show a wide angle of problems (raised) in the article.

**EXCAL:** *So, when you're given a story, how does the creative process occur?*

**KOLACZ:** When I first hear what the story is about I start to think . . . Then I read the story, and familiar-